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THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs) AND GRASS-ROOTS COMMUNITIES

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Association de Conseil Gestion aux Initiatives des Communautes de Base (CONGAT/ICB)

LC/NAIROB

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

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"Dig deep into yourself, for from within comes all that is good and if you keep digging, good ever new will gush forth."

Reflexions of Marcus Aurelius - 7, 59.

"Within yourself is to be found all that there is in the world".

Origen

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five years after independence, African countries are still fighting to improve the living conditions of their people, of their rural folk in particular. This official statement reflects the deep and persistent crisis which African society is undergoing. The crisis has placed most people in a position where their vital needs are not met and they cannot adapt to the proposed pattern of development.

However, it is precisely those people who are doomed by the system to despair and to a slow death who provide the first cause of hope in that they are, by their deeds, becoming the authors of their own development, creators of the conditions under which they live and of a world in which life is made possible for all. People are reaching back into their common memory which constitutes the basis of their hope for the future and the grass-roots creativity thus unleashed is not only mushrooming but being co-ordinated more and more.

A second reason for hope is taking shape in the sustainment, by social leadership structures, of economic reforms that are being expressed in business ventures that show that people are moving on from words to figures.

No less a reason for hope is derived from the initiation by African and international governmental organizations (as witness the findings of the African Symposium on Grass-roots Development held in Niamey in 1987) of contractual relationships under which NGO operations are properly co-ordinated. The realization is that development through administered planning should allow for and give place to participatory planning.

So much for hopes. As for NGO experiences, these will be reviewed in the three parts of this paper being submitted as a humble contribution.

Grass-roots communities: the view of this paper is reflected in the identification and promotion of local initiatives which, if they should last, should be based on stable organizations that enjoy complete autonomy.

If development activities are to be rooted in the heritage of people then they must participate culturally and historically in that endeavour.

NGOs are considered in this paper as business partners and associated businesses.

When refering to grass-roots communities, all the strata of the population they cover are designated.

Experience teaches, however, that women and young people play a role in the development of such grass-roots communities. Women in particular play a crucial role in what have been termed informal organizations and additional family revenue enterprises which, in times of distress, constitute the major means of survival.

As with women, young people invest their energies in what have been termed marginal, peripheral, informal and even deviant undertakings when compared with the norms legitimized by the system.

If such a contribution could be of some use it would be a pleasure, but it becomes a joy because of the hope that grass-roots communities inspire. Such institutions as village development associations, co-operatives and groupings are as mortal as human civilizations and often, in the field, their mortality rate can be calculated. We do know, however, that the dead are not dead and that the true mark of life is not to last but rather to be reborn.

My special thanks go to Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of ECA, for inviting me to present this paper.

In carrying out this assignment, I have been helped by friends from all walks of life.

My feeling now is one of thankfulness. A thankfulness freely yielded in reciprocation and homage. Because such thankfulness liberates us from any calculation, it forms the symbol of our commitment to serve our fellow Africans and our continent.

Akpalo Kouassivi
CONGAT/ICB

A. POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

I. The concept of grass-roots development

1. Observation

In light of the fact that development planning experience (dating from 1966) has not made for an improvement in rural living standards, it has became necessary to accord greater importance to the principle of grass-roots development.

The concern to programme projects whose implementation would directly address the expected needs of people and to promote small-scale projects using local initiative has become a matter of urgency for national planning officials.

These are the terms in which the Togolese authorities couched their new development option in 1985.

The general theme of the African Symposium on Grass-roots Development held in Niamey in June 1987 presented the situation in the following terms:

Twenty-five years after independence, African countries are still fighting to improve the living conditions of their people, of their rural folk in particular....

Generally, the economic and social development plans and programmes of the past were overly focused on micro-economic objectives. Currently, the inefficacy of such policies to promote grass-roots development should be pointed out.

The experiences of African countries such as Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Mali and the Niger show what those countries had undertaken with a view to effecting grass-roots development. Nevertheless, all the indications are that peoples participation in development remains poor probably because there are no appropriate mechanisms instituted to achieve effective integration.

2. Towards the new concept

The new approach to development define by the Niamey Symposium takes the aforementioned observations as a point of departure and introduces the notion of power as a dimension of the issue. Not only is it a fact that local communities constitute the majority of the population and yet have no effective power but also the are dominated in their relationship by those who do.

The new concept put forward by the Niamey Symposium raised the concept of grass-roots development to the level of strategy and advocated it to be an option for African society. That option obviously implies that decision-making responsibility at all levels, in particular the political, economic and technical, should be shared.

This is more than explicitly stated in the consideration of grass-roots development as a complex and continuous process of activities aimed at meeting the ever-growing material, moral, social and cultural needs of the population.

It requires the involvement of grass-roots people in all decision-making and the making of them into motivated and active partners.

This development option overtly and resolutely challenges the explicit or implicit thinking of the classical development models which have led Africa into the current crisis.

It adopts a far more positive approach by stressing the qualitative aspects of development. Development should involve mankind as a whole, influence his life-style as it is, in turn, influenced by his conception of culture-specific.

In that regard, grass-roots development is based on four major characteristics:

(a) It aims at meeting the basic needs of the majority: material needs in terms of goods and services and also such non-material needs as education and participation in management and decision-making;

(b) It should be integrated and self-sustaining: operational and regional integration should, as a matter of priority, use locally-available material and human resources in order to make for collective self reliance;

(c) It should be endogenous, that is to say, be based on an independent political process suited to the peculiar nature of each society and require structural changes at the political and socio-economic levels; and

(d) It should be ecologically sound to the extent that it both controls and protects the environment: in making technological choices, care should be taken to promote local capabilities and to improve traditional techniques at the same time that industrial techniques are adapted and new technologies created.

Most of the problems are specific to a region and the environment has a considerable influence over such specificity.

Conclusion

If the majority of the rural poor are to be able to participate in development, they should be organized into autonomous groupings or movements.

One of the remarkable consequences of this idea is that it allows for a plurality of solutions based on the extreme economic, social and cultural diversity of regions.

If economic and social problems were identified at the local level, development programmes and policies would, in turn, lend themselves to implementation at that same level.

II. The grass-roots in terms of traditional solidarity

Within the context of Africa's current development, the concept of the grass-roots takes many forms: village development associations with such off-shoots as village groups, women, youth and other groups, community self-help

initiatives, business fraternities, associations of nationals and other mutual assistance groups.

The common characteristic feature of these inventive and creative grass-roots organizations is that their solidarity has been forced or generated by the environment and seeks to help the society in which it evolves.

In order to describe the various types of traditional solidarity from a development viewpoint, three modes of analysis will be used to highlight some of the realities that such organizations experience internally. These will be:

(a) The analysis of needs and how they have been addressed;

(b) The analysis of functions and activities; and

(c) The analysis of structural forms and levels.

1. Analysis of needs and how they have been addressed

Traditional solidarity is characterized by collective reaction to individual needs expressed at various levels. Chief among them are:

(a) Subsistence needs for water, food and shelter;

(b) Security considerations;

(c) Profit motives;

(d) Psycho-social needs;

(e) Interaction and other needs.

2. Analysis of functions and activities

Traditional solidarity groups perform a number of function and activities, namely:

(a) Economic functions: savings and credit schemes (tontines); production and marketing activities; craft making; installation (building) of community facilities;

(b) Psycho-social functions: self-training and education by the group; strengthening of group cohesion through the settlement of conflicts and maintenance of discipline; coverage of such social risks as old age, illness and death;

(c) Cultural functions: educational, festive, sporting and theatrical actvities.

3. Forms and levels of solidarity structures

The structuring of traditional associations may fall into two categories:

(a) Service associations

These often develop spontaneously and are structured as and when events or needs arise. Examples are roof repairs and death. A volunteer or designated person may lead the group.

There are also periodic forms of association: a group of persons may meet and organize itself for the purpose of mutual assistance over a specific period of time. The leadership of the group is entrusted in such cases to the oldest or most influential.

More structured and lasting forms are the occasions when a committee is set up with a chairman, secretary and other officers.

(b) Financial associations

Here, ad hoc and spontaneous contributions are made to cope with an immediate need such as a death or fire outbreak. One person assumes the responsibility for collecting the funds.

Tontines can be structured and directed by a committee whose mandate may be renewed by members.

Several factors come into play when tontine associations are formed. Sex, background, affinity, neighbourhood, religion, occupation and age may be the criteria for membership.

4. Potential and limits of associations

Traditional associations have both potential and limitations.

(a) Potential

This lies in the ability of associations to promote the striking of a balance between the individual and society, harmony within the society and an advocacy which allows the association to meet with modern structures.

In economic and financial terms, the sums of money saved are better managed and therefore free from monopoly. This imparts dynamism to the association.

Similarly, the functions and activities of such associations have the potential of enabling the human and socio-cultural values of the society in which they operate to be preserved.

Therefore, associations are not only structure within the environment but also a way of structuring society itself.

(b) Limitations

Because of their small size, their more or less tribal nature and the illiteracy which restricts their prospects for development, such associations often do not last long.

In their functions, they have financial limitations which do not allow them to undertake sizeable investments. Their legal and technical limitations are reflected in the absence of statutes, in organizational, know-how and material deficiencies.

Because they are geographically circumscribed, as people living within a locality, they may have no interaction with others.

B. POPULAR PARTICIPATION AS AN APPROACH TO GRASS-ROOTS DEVELOPMENT

I. The approaches

Africa's experiments with the participation of its people in development have yielded poor results because there are no appropriate mechanisms for achieving effective integration. Such participation practices may be classified under four criteria based on a few basic dynamic relationships.

1. Co-operation under a pre-established programme, plan or project

Generally three phases can be noted in the place accorded to popular participation in the national policies pursued in Africa south of the Sahara.

In the years following independence, the need for popular participation was officially recognized and addressed in many rural and urban leadership programmes carried out in Senegal, the Niger and Madagascar and in the community development projects implemented in such English-speaking African countries as Ghana, Kenya and so on.

Around 1970, this approach was replaced in practice, especially in the rural areas, by projects which could be defined as a specific intervention of the State in the lives of farmers with a view to achieving such objectives over delimited time, space and using specific resources.

In this case, participation was like mobilization of people into a process designed as part of an institutional framework over which the farmers had no control.

Since the 1980s, such projects have been questioned mainly because of their costs and their limited ability to deliver.

(b) A community may be organized from the top downwards with the express aim of promoting the participation of its members. Village co-operatives or rural unions and groups are typical examples of the organizational forms imported into Africa. Curiously, these forms of organization initiated by State agencies were introduced into those branches of economic activity where cash crops like cotton, coffee and cocoa were produced. In this case, there is a convergence between the interest of the State (in promoting a foreign exchange earning commodity), the interest of the farmers and that of such aid agencies as the World Bank and the Caisse centrale de coopération économique.

For a quarter century after independence, the history of co-operatives has been marked by a series of failures and reforms which have often discouraged farmers.

In such situations of false co-operatives, it is not the appellation which counts but rather the organizational function which should be controlled by the members and contribute effectively to improving their living conditions.

(c) Community development

The English-speaking African countries, in particular, have kept organizations drawing on the tradition of community development. In this approach, many examples of successful participation can be found especially when the field of application is clearly defined in terms of water, health care, infrastructure and the like. This last form of participation does not necessarily take an institutional form. All it needs is self-help initiative.

(d) Responsibility

Particularly in recent years when people's organizations such as village development associations, ICA, ICB, IID and other co-operatives have spontaneously been created, the structures assuming responsibility for control of the environment and its future have been little considered.

Such organizations have not been created in any way by decision of the State but they often contributed to structuring the grass-root.

Their operations take the form of participation as promoted by NGOs and often involve, if only implicitly, the sharing of power as well as resources.

II. THE BASIS OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION

From their common memory, people draw inspiration for the future.

The fact is that the magnitude of the current crisis in Africa exceeds the capability of African Governments to cope within the limitations of their genius and the various programmes they have adopted. Africa is too much of a problem for any economic or ideological doctrine of whatever hue to deal with alone.

The numerous challenges that are emerging as the millennium comes to a close can be summarized by what I would term the single challenge of Africa's survival. This challenge calls for a basic needs strategy and requires all men of goodwill to promote a civilization of simplicity.

A civilization of simplicity creates, first and foremost, a simple society based on an efficient interaction of the creative energies of the broad masses and for that reason draws on the people's wisdom. It uses the collective memory in delving into the wellspring of people's knowledge and energy as a necessary means of creating and recreating the conditions for survival.

III. WHAT IS POPULAR PARTICIPATION?

(a) Popular participation consists of restoring the power of local people to take the initiative and the decisions in formulating and implementing activities and programmes concerning their own future. It consists of recognizing that the people (farmers, livestock raisers, urban dwellers and so on) are creators of change and full-fledged partners in development;

(b) Promoting popular participation therefore means instituting a partnership, a contractual relationship among the various agents of development, in particular between the people concerned and those intervening from the outside. Whether the programmes are initiated from outside or in support of previously existing local initiatives, those intervening from outside should start off where the needs and aspirations of the people begin and accept to negotiate on that basis.

If in many cases, such a partnership is initially held back by such factors as poor organization and improper formulation of request for assistance, the conditions for the partnership must be created;

(c) Popular participation is not only expressed at a local village or community level in the implementation of specific programmes but must also extend to the definition of development policies for larger areas (regional and national) which should be phased in as and when the grass-root people's organizations consolidate and federate themselves;

(d) Popular participation is a continuous and dynamic process which allows people to identify the economic and socio-cultural institutions that make for the grounding of their programmes and the constant renewal of action groups.

IV. OBSTACLES TO POPULAR PARTICIPATION

Two categories of obstacles can be identified: those concerning the relationship between people's organizations and agencies intervening from the outside (the State or NGOs); and those relating to producer organizations and the operating principles and rules imported and applied.

1. Obstacles relating to partnership

One of the major obstacles to popular participation is, without any doubt the unwillingness of outside agencies to demonstrate a genuine resolve in the practice of partnership. On the one hand, the projects and activities carried out in the field are formulated at the initiative of an outside body acting in an administrative capacity and issuing directives without really consulting the beneficiaries. On the other hand, through their project, the outside agencies resort to the dynamics of social and group psychology with a view to correcting the internal relation-ships of an organization without modifying its structure.

Because there are so many development agencies each dealing with problems in each sector, people can only get more and more confused because they do not have the training necessary to understand how all those activities which are being proposed willy nilly to them tie into one another. The people give the

impression of being overwhelmed by the publicity that development agents make about their project.

The tendency is to set up village groups, associations and committees each time a new operation commences.

This has the double inconvenience of multiplying, at times needlessly, people's organizations and marginalizing existing forms of organization with the result, in cases, of creating social tension. Certain circumstances also constitute obstacles to popular participation because the concept is tied up with demographic practice and is hardly compatible with authoritarian regimes or the bureaucratic mentality of civil servants.

2. Obstacles relating to imported ideas

When the four first articles considered by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) as formal criteria for classification as a co-operative are applied to producers' organizations in a completely different cultural environment, serious obstacles to popular participation arise. The four first principles are as follows:

(a) Freedom of membership: the principle of free individual membership is significant in a society actually composed of autonomous individuals who can take decisions independently of the group to which they belong (the extended family or the community).

Freedom of membership is reflected in the payment of social dues in monetary form. When this is fixed by authority from outside, the result is an increase of domestic inequalities. This principle should be replaced with village community decisions taken after serious consultation to decide who shall be members of the group or co operative and how such membership may be acquired.

For organizations based on existing village structures, the fact of being a villager ipso facto makes one a member of the association and, in that capacity, confers the right of access, on the same footing as any other villager, to all the services provided by the association in terms of production inputs, credit and the like.

(b) One man one vote: it is not this basic principle which is being questioned but the way it is aped in African societies and the serious cultural misunderstandings it creates. Such a principle is so far removed from the social logic of African society that it becomes not only inadmissible but also incomprehensible. The local communities concerned are structured on a system of values which places individuals in a hierarchy and determines their position on the social ladder using such criteria as age, sex and caste.

3. Returns commensurate with operations

By making it a co-operative obligation, right from the outset, that surpluses should be distributed among individual members, the confidence of members is being elicited to the detriment of community welfare. The spontaneous reactions of farmers in such cases is to use such funds for community purposes.

4. Capital-limited interest

When free individual membership is reflected in the payment of social dues, the practical outcome, as was demonstrated earlier, is an increase in domestic inequalities.

This paradox in setting up a 'share company' under the label of a co-operative occurs when the enterprise carries out the collection and lending operations to its sole benefit.

The principle of limiting interest is also side-tracked and understood to be equally a limitation of the interests accruing to the co-operative on the loans granted to members.

To conclude, specific reference to ICA principles should be abandoned in favour of the spirit of Rochdale. Since the final objective of society is to have the powers of production, distribution, education and self-governance, or to be a self-supporting community, it should have the courage to differ from imported models which are based on unsuitable laws.

This also means that instead of beginning with legislation and making farmers toe the line, they should be consulted first in discussing the specific problems they face and be helped to organize themselves. Following that, the provisional structures will operate to rules of procedure that can be revised every year. Only after some years will the synthesis of such rules of procedure give rise to statute on the basis of which suitable legislation can be enacted to strengthen what can be seen to be traditional democracy.

C. RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NGOs AND PEOPLES' ORGANIZATIONS

Today, NGOs are considered as dynamic auxiliaries in the system of development co-operation.

They are mainly associations of citizens who assign themselves a relatively specific social objective not coming under public authority and which, even if they pursue economic objectives, do happen to be a private enterprise in the usual meaning of the term. Obviously, NGOs which participate in development are, at the same time, pursuing economic objectives but in contrast to private enterprises which are production and marketing organizations seeking exclusively to enrich their individual members, NGOs essentially aim at securing the welfare of a community even though the members may become rich in the process.

As defined, Africa is rich in NGOs. Mention was made of village development associations, co-operatives, tontines and village groups at the local level. At the regional or national level can be found organizations created by the churches. Also to be found are national branches of African regional or international NGOs.

The common characteristics of these NGOs are: ideological independence; the concern to be independent of the public authorities of their countries of

origin or host countries; financial independence; flexibility in operation; a rather global approach; a strategy of working closely with the grass-roots.

I. VILLAGE ASSOCIATIONS AS CONSTRUCTS FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The question which might need to be asked is whether (through popular participation) these grass-roots organizations can take up the major challenges which Africa has to face at the close of this century. The three main challenges are the following: the meeting of essential needs; the struggle to control the degradation of eco-systems; and the community management of land.

1. Associations and the meeting of essential needs

As COOPEC, tontines and other associations have found, the existence of autonomous financial resources in the villages radically changes the relationship of villagers with external aid donors.

From the status of beggars, villagers are becoming solvent clients who can pay in full or in part for the services they need.

2. Associations and the struggle to check environmental degradation

Without any dispute, this is the most tragic issue facing sub-Saharan Africa today. And yet nothing but collective solutions can be found to this problem to the extent that whole drainage basins have to be developed and vast spaces planted with trees. Here again, village associations have a decisive role to play in mobilizing both the labour and the capital required.

3. Associations and instruments of land administration

The cumulative economic inequalities resulting in an increasingly higher imbalance in land distribution will later bring about private allocation and land concentration systems which will give those left out a mere choice between receiving salaries or moving away.

It is here that village associations could assume the new and most vital role of community land management. This would entail a constantly renewed process of adjustment between cultivable land areas, the number of consumers and the number of farm hands.

This would require the surveying and mapping not of individual farms but of all village lands.

The new communal dynamism created by the associations should be put to profitable use by undertaking serious discussions in villages on land sharing and on long-term family land use.

II. NGOS AND INTERDEPENDENCE

As already mentioned, Africa abounds in NGOs, which variously bring together junior or senior citizens and deal with micro and macro economic issues.

Some are engaged in training or in production, others are religious and others secular.

Some observations made about NGOs and sometimes by NGOs themselves are that they often play the role of the people's mouthpiece; it is believed that they are not easily taken as partners by the people and that they are underestimated by Government organizations. Funding NGOs impose their principles and conditions. It is time these practices were changed.

NGOs interact with a number of agents who may be perceived as problematic or conflictual factors in the operating environment which is decided into four categories, namely:

(a) Groups of internal endogenous agents such as individual farmers and farmers associations;

(b) Groups of external endogenous agents such as NGOs and related bodies such as churches;

(c) Groups of internal agents such as Government organizations (NGOs) in working relationship with farmers organizations and NGOs; and

(d) A group of exogenous external agents made up of funding GOs or NGOs.

1. Towards contractual planning

As development associations, NGOs adopt development strategies. There is a saying that one can not embark on a project without first planning it, and a plan can not be considered well executed until all the parts of the project have been completed.

In other words, to integrate there must first be planning and to plan there must first be integration. This dilemma is the origin of contractual planning, that is the imposition of project planning under a system of laws or obligations and the freedom of association represented in village development associations village groupings, ICD and others.

The local or regional NGOs plan areas of co-operation with Government organizations, areas such as rural development and health. When project agreement has been concluded with a Governmental organization of the economic North the package is brought back to the grassroots level.

Efforts at the grassroots and highest levels (whether at the level of Southern GOs or NGOs or Northern GOs or NGOs) have to be integrated to form a dynamic force.

The NGOs should use all the various facets of contractual planning to catalyse popular participation in the numerous aspects of integrated development. Somehow, there question arises as to who should sign a contract with whom or what should be integrated into what with regard to:

(a) Entrepreneurial development;

(b) local development;

(c) Organizational development;

(d) North-South, or even South-South development;

(e) Technological development;

(f) Educational development; and

(g) Intergenerational development.

2. NGO efforts in respect of self-organizing groups

The "Six S" groups of Yatenga in Burkina Faso created the axiom of "development without destruction". Given the principles summarized in this axiom, what farmers are, experience, know, do and want should inform the attitudes to be developed towards a group that is mobilized and constitutes the traditional target of NGO actions, involving:

(a) Respect for the local group dynamics that facilitate study of the environment and research development;

(b) Promotion of self-help given the fact that no action taken to help out the beneficiary can be really beneficial to him since the benefit is thus derived from the action itself and not necessarily from its result;

(c) Enablement of the group to manage its own projects;

(d) Acceptance of the group's development methods and its projects;

(e) Empowerment rather than corruption of the local group with assistance and aid;

(f) Journeying of local groups in their quest to appropriate the project and achieve autonomy by helping them to create efficient technical services that address their management, organizational and self-evaluation needs;

(g) Walking the group through its reflections on the purpose of its action.

Our analysis is on the attitude to be adopted by the NGOs in order to win the confidence of their contractual partners. The following three observations will suffice.

(a) The Governmental organizations will take NGOs seriously:

(i) if they talk less and act more, in other words, NGO ideologies (and sometimes rhetoric) tend to irritate Governments when those words are not translated into concrete and organized action;

(ii) If they succeed in presenting a specific regional plan of their actions, instead of spreading their operations thin and failing to connect them coherently;

(iii) If they operate in synergy by making a special effort to pool their resources through an optimal combination of factors.

(b) The international NGOs will take national NGOs seriously:

(i) If they demonstrate a strong resolve in stimulating action, initiative and new ideas and if they refuse to be mere endurers of the passing fancy of financial organizations;

(ii) If their zeal is prompted by a real desire for organizational and financial autonomy, even if such a desire can only be realized in the medium and long-term; whatever the case, it has been programmed.

(c) NGOs absolutely need to use a regulatory instrument to fortify existing systems and provide them with a launching pad. This is necessary for the following reasons:

(i) Regional planning: One can no longer be restricted in time and space but must move on to the pursuit of collective strategies within the context of regional planning.

(ii) Economies of scale: The financial autonomy that all the NGOs are advocating can be achieved only with the institution of such services as would help to avoid duplication or triplication of similar services.

(iii) Reaching beyond the local level: As earlier mentioned, the age of restriction by time and space has passed. What is needed now is regionalization, that is, planning while taking the region into account. For instance, how can agricultural products be marketed without setting up regional unions and regional marketing centres. If this is not implemented at the NGO level, then it would be imposed by the Government organizations. Economics must reach beyond the local level, otherwise the local economy loses.

(d) Horizontal co-operation: NGOs usually possess extraordinary potentialities in their various fields of activity, but these potentialities are limited by the mere fact that each NGO is specialized. Nevertheless, the requests made and the services offered are diverse, hence the demand for linking up with other NGOs and encouraging horizontal combined action, which will have a convergent effect on and result in an optimal utilization of each NGO's resources. There is one condition however and that is, an open-door policy, foresight, accessibility and information.